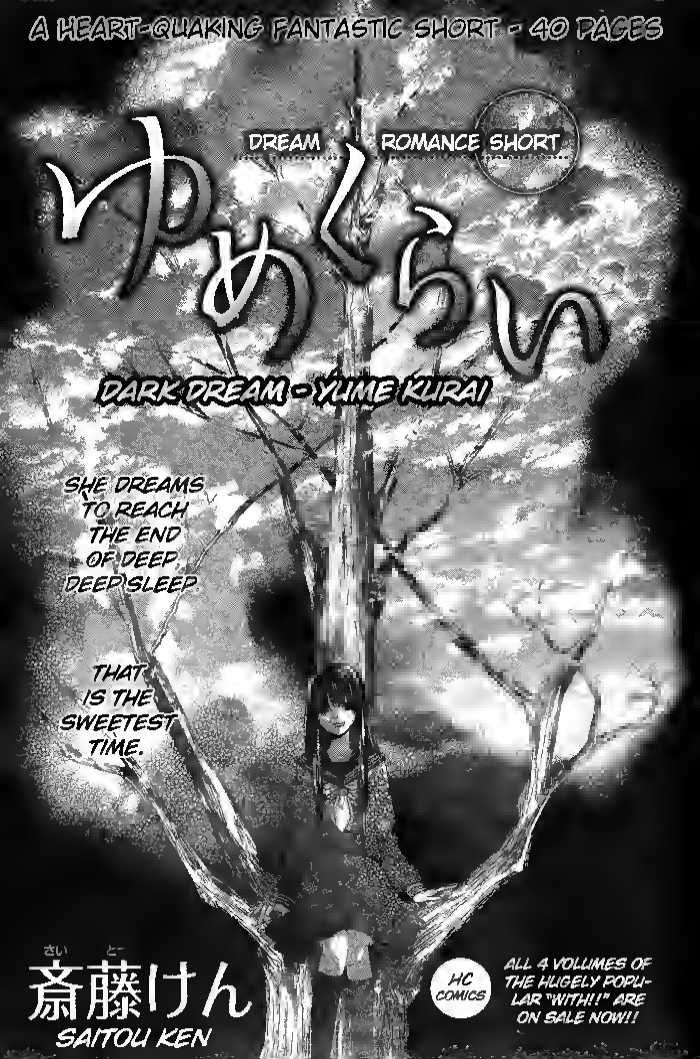
A HEART-QUAKING FANTASTIC SHORT - 40 PAGES

DREAM ROMANCE SHORT

ゆめくらい

DARK DREAM - YUME KURAI



斎藤けん
SAITOU KEN

HC COMICS
ALL 4 VOLUMES OF THE HUGELY POPULAR "WITH!!" ARE ON SALE NOW!!

*"Baku" means "Tapir" a pig like browsing mammal traditionally thought to devour dreams (particularly nightmares) in Japan We felt "Baku" would sound more natural as a name —ed

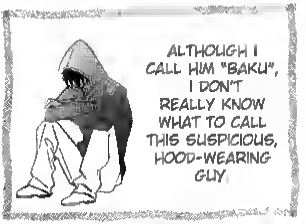
AKANE!
AH!

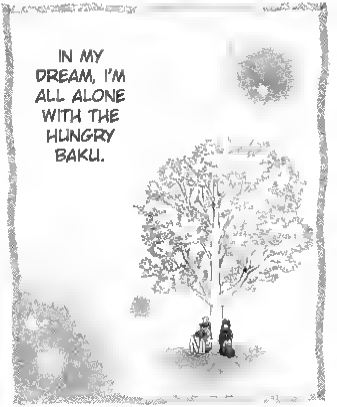
IF YOU DON'T HURRY UP AND FINISH, THE SCHOOL GATES'LL BE CLOSED.
ANY-WAY,
WERE YOU SLEEP-ING?
...YEAH

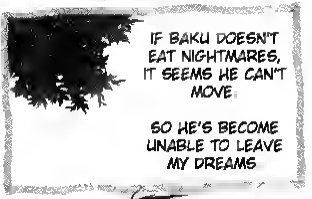
GEEZ, IF YOU'RE LATE CLOSING THE ART-ROOM,
I'LL HAVE TO SCOLD YOU AS THE CLUB MANAGER.
SORRY, SORRY.

LATELY, I'VE BEEN HAVING A WEIRD DREAM.

妄想toons

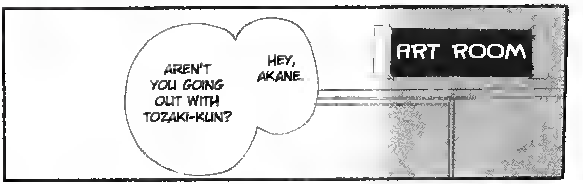

ALTHOUGH I CALL HIM "BAKU", I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO CALL THIS SUSPICIOUS, HOOD-WEARING GUY.

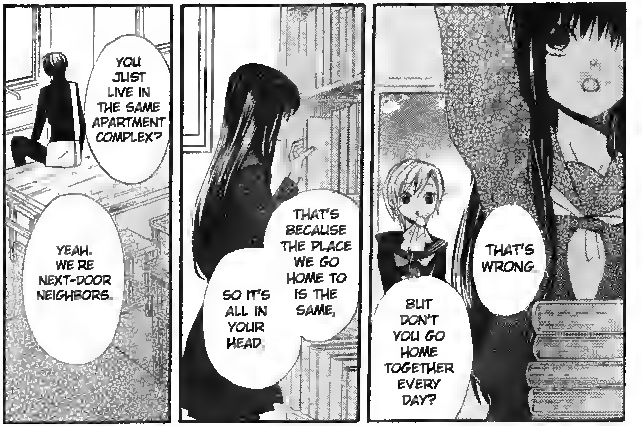

IN MY DREAM, I'M ALL ALONE WITH THE HUNGRY BAKU.


IF BAKU DOESN'T EAT NIGHTMARES, IT SEEMS HE CAN'T MOVE.
SO HE'S BECOME UNABLE TO LEAVE MY DREAMS.

IF I KEEP ON NOT HAVING ANY NIGHT-MARES, WILL THAT BAKU...
...STARVE TO DEATH?
OPEN
AKANE.

* "KUN" IS A SUFFIX GENERALLY ADDED TO THE NAMES OF MALE PEERS AND YOUNGER BOYS WHICH SHOWS FAMILIARITY —ED




YOU JUST LIVE IN THE SAME APARTMENT COMPLEX?
YEAH. WE'RE NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS.
THAT'S BECAUSE THE PLACE WE GO HOME TO IS THE SAME,
SO IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD.
THAT'S WRONG.
BUT DON'T YOU GO HOME TOGETHER EVERY DAY?

BUT, YOU KNOW...
ISN'T BEING CHILDHOOD FRIENDS WHO LIVE NEXT DOOR TO EACH OTHER IN THE SAME APARTMENT COMPLEX A HUGE LOVE FLAG?
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT WITH AKIRA-KUN AND ME...
THAT'S BECAUSE WE'RE FRIENDS, RIGHT?
YEAH...

...WHAT NICE WEATHER.
IT IS.
YOU CAN TELL THROUGH YOUR HOOD?

NO WAY.
AT ANY RATE, YOU CAN'T SEE THROUGH THAT THING.
OR, YOU CAN'T SEE AT ALL?
WRONG.
I CAN'T SEE ANY COLOR.
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS.
COME TO THINK OF IT, BAKU, YOU SEE IN BLACK AND WHITE, RIGHT?
WHAT DO THEY TASTE LIKE?

... WHY DO YOU ASK?
BECAUSE YOU EAT NIGHT-MARES, RIGHT?
AREN'T NIGHT-MARES BITTER?
YEAH, THEY'RE BITTER.
DO YOU LIKE BITTER THINGS?
DON'T YOU WANT TO EAT SWEET THINGS?
NOT REALLY.
... NOT REALLY.
BUT
REALLY SAD DREAMS
FEEL SWEET FOR JUST A MOMENT.

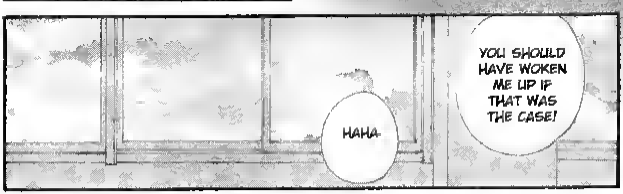
FOR ME, THAT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE.
BECAUSE I'D WANT TO EAT YUMMY THINGS
LIKE RAMEN* OR GYUDON* OR YAKINIKU*.
...
AHHH.
BUT THAT'S THE LIMIT OF IT.
IN REALITY, THEY'RE BITTER.

* Ramen" "Gyudon" and "Yakiniku" are all Japanese meals —ED

...
HUH?

YOU'VE GOT SOME DROOL THERE.

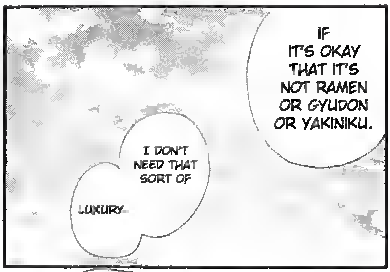
HAH


HAHA.
YOU SHOULD HAVE WOKEN ME UP IF THAT WAS THE CASE!

—IS IT OKAY?
WHAT IF YOU CAME TO EAT AT MY HOUSE?

CONVEN-IENCE STORE LUNCH.
AKANE,
WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR DINNER TONIGHT?

妄想scans



* CHAN IS THE FEMALE EQUIVALENT OF KUN —ED

"CHILDREN'S HALLS" IN JAPAN ARE LIKE EVENING DAYCARES FOR KIDS WHOSE PARENTS CAN'T GET THEM AFTER SCHOOL. ED

AKANE,
YOU OFTEN USED TO MAKE PICTURE BOOKS FOR ME
BECAUSE MY FAVOR-ITE THING TO DO WAS PLAYING WITH AKIRA-KUN.
...AT THAT TIME I HATED GOING HOME
OFTEN USED TO SAY THAT WHEN AKANE-CHAN WOULD LEAVE, AKIRA WOULD CRY BUCKETS AND CAUSE SOME TROUBLE
THE TEACHERS OF THE CHILD-REN'S HALL
Akane-chan

妄想scans

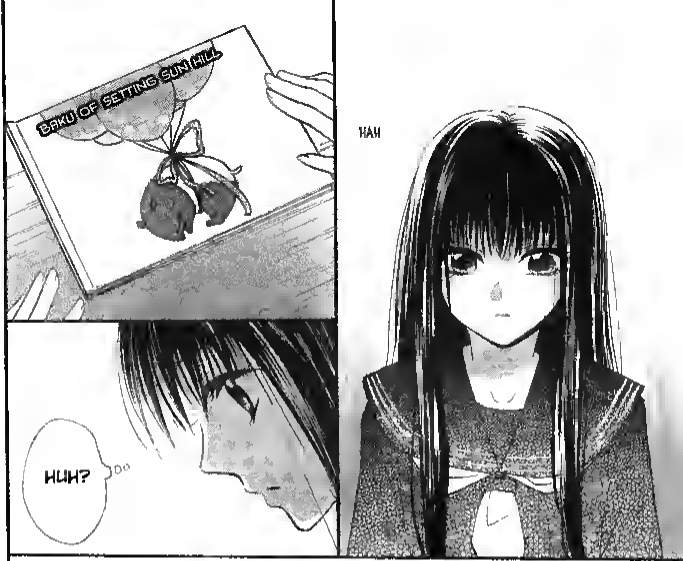
I REALLY LIKED THE SUNSETS WE COULD SEE FROM THAT TREE.
WE WOULD CLIMB THAT HUGE TREE AT THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE
AND READ THOSE PICTURE BOOKS TOGETHER UNTIL THE SUN WENT DOWN.
THAT TREE WILL BE TORN DOWN
...THAT'S RIGHT.
EVERY-ONE IS CHANGING.

WHAT KIND OF STORY DID YOU MAKE THIS TIME?
IT'S A STORY ABOUT A TAPIR WHO EATS BAD DREAMS.
AKANE-CHAN.
The black and white tapir lived all alone in a black and white world.
"THE BLACK AND WHITE TAPIR LIVED ALL ALONE IN A BLACK AND WHITE WORLD."
AKANE-CHAN.
"ONE DAY, THE TAPIR ATE A VERY BITTER DREAM."
"THERE WERE SWEET DREAMS AND SPICY DREAMS."
"THE PEOPLE'S DREAMS HAD VARIOUS FLAVORS."
"THE TAPIR'S FOOD WAS PEOPLE'S DREAMS."

That was a human's nightmare.
"THAT WAS A HUMAN'S NIGHTMARE."
The person whose bad dream the tapir ate was very happy.
"THE PERSON WHOSE BAD DREAM THE TAPIR ATE WAS VERY HAPPY."
WHY DID I CHOOSE A TAPIR?
PROBABLY
IT WAS BECAUSE AKIRA-KUN OFTEN HAD BAD DREAMS AND CRIED.
HOW NOSTALGIC,
DRAWING THESE KINDS OF PICTURE BOOKS.

THE TAPIR
"STEADILY EATING BAD DREAMS,
"EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE BITTER, HE ATE THEM."
SO HE ATE MANY MORE BAD DREAMS."
"THE KIND TAPIR WAS GLAD THAT THE PERSON WAS HAPPY
DESTROYED HIS STOMACH AND DIED."
EHHH.
SHUTTLE SHUTTLE
THE POOR TAPIR.
THAT'S REALLY TRUE.
SNIFF
THE END

EVEN THOUGH I DREW IT FOR AKIRA-KUN'S SAKE,
IT CAN'T BE HELPED THAT IT MADE HIM CRY.
...TRY READING IT UNTIL THE VERY END.
THAT PICTURE BOOK.
BAKU OF SETTING SUN HILL


BAKU OF SETTING SUN HILL
HAH
HUH?

IS TOZAKI-KUN NOT COMING TODAY?
AH .. YEAH.
HE SAID HE HAD SOME-THING TO DO TODAY.
AKANE,
YOU REALLY DO SLEEP A LOT

妄想scans

I LIKE HIM,
BUT IT'S NOT IN A ROMANTIC WAY.
THIS AGAIN?
AKANE.
DO YOU REALLY NOT LIKE TOZAKI-KUN?
Y--
YEAH.
DO YOU REALLY MEAN THAT?

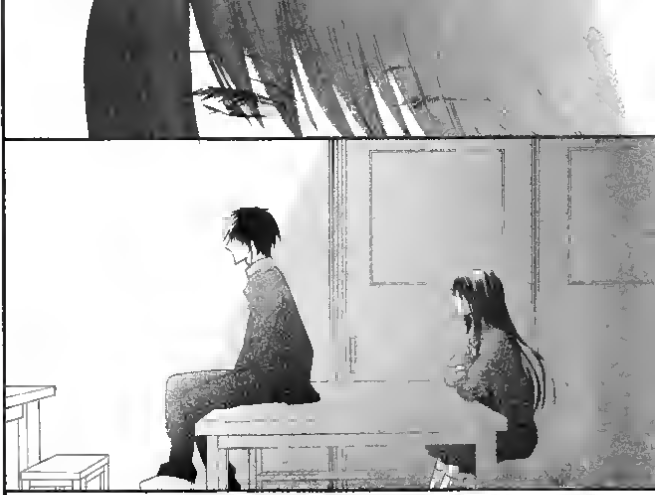
THEN MAYBE I SHOULD AIM FOR HIM.

AKANE-CHAN.
AKANE-CHAN.
WHAT HAPPENED?
EVEN I'M LIVING WITH JUST MY MOM.
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
I WAS TOLD I CAN'T SEE MY MOM ANYMORE.
YOU KNOW
FROM NOW ON
I WAS TOLD THAT I HAVE TO LIVE WITH JUST MY DAD.

BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T LIKE ME ANYMORE
MY MOM LEFT ME BEHIND.
IT'S DIFFERENT THAN YOUR SITUATION, AKIRA-KUN
SO I NO LONGER WANT TO LOVE ANYONE...
EVEN THOUGH I LOVE HER, SHE WON'T LET ME STAY BY HER SIDE,
BUT EVEN YOU, AKIRA-KUN, MIGHT STOP LIKING ME AT SOME POINT
...I'M ALWAYS BY YOUR SIDE, AKANE-CHAN!

OUR TEACHER SAID THAT IF WE'RE FRIENDS, WE'LL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER.
IT'S ALL RIGHT
BECAUSE AKANE-CHAN AND I ARE FRIENDS.
REALLY ..?
YEAH
WE'LL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER.

..., BAKU.
EARLIER, YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT DREAMS
THAT WERE REALLY BITTER.
I KNOW THAT TASTE.
I'M IMMERSED IN THIS COMFORTABLE SITUATION
AND MY SENSES HAVE BECOME DULLED.
I'VE NOTICED I'VE BECOME UNABLE TO MOVE.



AKIRA-KUN...

...TODAY
CAN WE
DROP IN FOR A BIT AT THE CHILDREN'S HALL?

NO TRESS-PASSING

THEY'VE ALREADY STARTED TEARING DOWN THE CHILDREN'S HALL.
SHOULD WE GO INSIDE?

AKANE.
WE WERE A BIT LATE TO SEE IT, WEREN'T WE?
.....

WOULD YOU...
BE OKAY IF I DATED SOMEONE ELSE?
...I'D BE FINE.
BECAUSE THAT WOULDN'T BE A REASON THAT YOU'D HAVE TO GO SOMEWHERE.
...I SEE.

OKAY.
THEN,
LET'S GO HOME.
YEAH...
...WAIT.

SCREECH
I
AKANE!

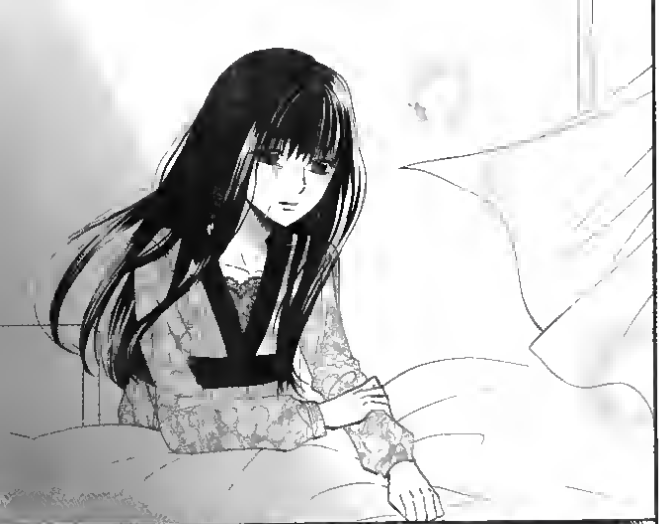
HAH
LOOK,
AKANE.

THE SUNSET
IS BEAUTIFUL.
THE SUNSET I WATCHED TOGETHER WITH YOU, AKANE,
WAS A REALLY WARM COLOR.
NO
BUT I REMEMBER.
YOU CAN SEE IT?

...
I'M SORRY
FOR NOT NOTICING AFTER ALL THIS TIME,
I,
CO-WARILY
AND INDE-CISIVELY,
CLING TO THAT SMALL PROMISE ...
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS JUST THAT,
I WANTED TO BE TOGETHER WITH YOU, AKIRA-KUN.
YEAH.

WE CAN'T.
THE DREAM IS OVER ONCE YOU'VE REALIZED IT.
CAN'T WE MEET LIKE THIS INSIDE THE DREAM ANYMORE?
AND BESIDES, I HAVE TO GO EAT MANY MORE NIGHTMARES.
..I CAN'T MEET YOU ANYMORE?

YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU, AKANE?



"OBA-SAN" IS A POLITE WAY OF ADDRESSING OTHER PEOPLE'S MOTHERS/OLDER WOMEN. IT SIMPLY MEANS "AUNT". --ED

IF YOU'RE TIRED, IT'S ALL RIGHT TO REST SOME MORE.
YOUR UNIVERSITY GRADUATION PROJECT MUST BE TOUGH.
THANK YOU
FOR COMING EVERY DAY TO CHECK UP ON AKIRA'S CONDITION.
BECAUSE AKIRA-KUN
SAVED ME WHEN HE PROTECTED ME
AT THAT TIME FIVE YEARS AGO
...AKIRA IS SURELY GLAD THAT HE SAVED YOU, AKANE-CHAN.
BECAUSE
AKIRA'S LOVED YOU SINCE A LONG TIME AGO

...EVEN SO,
THE DOCTORS SAY THAT IT'S NOT ALL THAT STRANGE THAT WE DON'T KNOW WHEN HE'LL WAKE UP
THIS CHILD
IS PERHAPS HAVING A VERY FUN DREAM
...SOMEHOW,
IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S PRETTY BUSY
OBA-SAN,
WHEN I FINISH MY GRADUATION PROJECT,
PLEASE COME TAKE A LOOK AT IT.
OH?
WHAT ARE YOU MAKING??
A PICTURE BOOK.

I WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE ENDING, BUT...
I'VE REMEMBERED IT.
"GOD, WHO THOUGHT THE KIND TAPIR WAS PITIFUL,
God, who thought the kind tapir was pitiful,
TURNED THE TAPIR INTO A HUMAN."
THE END
SAITOU KEN-SENSEI'S NEXT SHORT STORY WILL APPEAR IN LALA DX, IN THE NOVEMBER 2009 ISSUE. CHECK IT OUT!

妄想scans

(AKA MOUSOU, OR "DELUSIONAL" SCANS --ED.)

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THE ORIGINAL COLOR PREVIEW PAGE FOR SAITOU KEN'S "DARK DREAM" OR "YUME KURAI"--

THE TRUE FORM OF THE TAPIR, SAID TO DEVOUR NIGHTMARES, IS REVEALED?!

JUST FOR FUN, A TAPIR!

THE ORIGINAL BLACK & WHITE PREVIEW FOR SAITOU KEN'S "DARK DREAM" OR "YUME KURAI"

THE TAPIR, A LIVING THING SAID TO DEVOUR NIGHTMARES. THE TIME TO REVEAL HIS TRUE FORM HAS ARRIVED...?!

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